

ENGLAND'S RELIGIOUS DUTIES TOWARDS EGYPT.

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It is with no affectation of diffidence, but with a very deep sense of insufficiency, that I approach this question ; but that side of it to which I shall mainly invite attention is, from my point of view, of such extreme importance that I shall offer no further apology for venturing to accept the invitation I have had the honour to receive to prepare a paper on the subject.

The few minutes at my disposal will oblige me to omit much that I would gladly say on the general subject, but this much I would urge in the name of common humanity ; that our first duty in Egypt is to secure the administration of justice without corruption, and the protection of the defenceless and the poor against the oppression of the strong. And secondly, that, if possible, the White and Blue Niles should not be suffered to pass into the hands of any slave-hunting or slave-holding power.

With these general remarks, I pass to the question to which I propose to confine myself ; our duty in relation to the Christian population of the country.

This population includes

1. The small community of the Orthodox, who are in communion with the Holy Eastern, or Greek Church.

2. The Coptic, or as we may call it, the Native Egyptian Church, said to number from 300,000 to 600,000 souls ; the latter estimate being that of a native gentleman, who, Miss Whately tells me, is especially well informed in statistics.

3. A mixed population of Greeks, Syrians, Maronites, Armenians, and other non-Egyptians, of divers sects and persuasions, the number of whom in the aggregate must be considerable, though their several communities, considered separately, may be comparatively small, and are migratory in character.

Our attention, then, will be mainly devoted to the consideration of our duty with relation to the first two classes, the Orthodox and the Copts. And here I would enter a claim, which I hope I shall be allowed to take for granted, that the expression *England's duty* in the title of our subject, and in connection with this department of it, though not perhaps with other departments, refers to *our duty as members of the Church of England exclusively* ; and the question to which I shall address myself is this, What is our duty, as Churchmen, towards the Christians of Egypt ?

First, then, with regard to the Orthodox. And here, I think a grand opportunity may, by the providence of God, be opening to us ; for we are brought by the force of circumstances face to face with a portion of

that vast Eastern communion, which, cradled in the birth-place of Christianity, has survived so many centuries of oppression and persecution, and still, throughout the dominion of the crescent, bears witness for the cross.

The orthodox Christians of Egypt are numerically few, and are not Egyptians by descent, even if born in the country. But they are a compact, well-defined community, representing, or rather being, the existing remnant of one of the three original patriarchates of the Church.

Their present head is the Patriarch Sophronius, and their clerical staff consists of one archbishop, thirty priests, and six deacons. They have churches in seventeen towns of Lower Egypt, and did possess one in Upper Egypt until it was lost to them by the late war. Their recognised creed is that of the 318 fathers at Nicæa, as enlarged at Constantinople, and ratified by the Œcumenical Council of Chalcedon. In other words, it is that which is commonly called the Nicene Creed, as we have it in our Prayer Book, only in its pure form, *i.e.*, without the *Filioque* in the procession clause, and with the word *holy* as one of the Notes of the Church. Their chief public office is, of course, the Eucharist ; in the celebration of which they probably use the well-known liturgy of St. Mark, the founder of the Church of Alexandria ; not, however, to the exclusion of others, such as that of St. Chrysostom, etc., all of which, I need hardly say, are emphatically sacrificial and sacramental in their tone. They minister, we are told, mainly to their own people, and do not proselytise, but live on friendly relations, though not in communion, with the Copts, whom we shall notice presently.

But though few in number, their position as a recognised portion of the Holy Eastern Church, renders our attitude towards them a matter of *the greatest consequence*. If we approach them in an unsympathetic spirit ; if we regard them as wandering in a desert of ignorance and superstition, and our dealing is marked by a tone of condescension and superiority ; if we endeavour to supplant their offices by the introduction of our own, or of something altogether novel in the form of a so-called Scriptural liturgy, a process attempted among the Syrian Christians of Malabar, then we shall be met with polite but determined opposition ; we may very likely succeed in producing a schism, and we shall certainly lose the opportunity before us.

But if we meet them in a spirit of affection and Christian love, anxious to receive them, and to be received by them as fellow-members of the great Christian family, willing to acknowledge and to admire rather than to find fault, and not bent upon bringing them to the level of our own standard in all things ; then we may, perhaps, both learn something ourselves, and may, peradventure, be permitted not only to urge any necessary reforms, but even to bring about a restoration of that Christian unity and intercommunion, the rupture of which is so deplorable.

I do not hold a brief in behalf the Eastern Church, to defend her through thick and thin ; there are some things, perhaps many things, which most of us, I suppose, would fain not find, both in her public offices, and in her manuals of private devotion. I cannot here digress into particulars, though it would be easy to do so. With the experience of the Western Church before us, and influenced by what may have fallen under our own observation, we are very properly sensitive and anxious about such matters as I have in mind ; and yet, I submit, it

might be going much too far to condemn all actions and expressions to which we ourselves may entertain the gravest repugnance. That which to our more prosaic minds may seem inseparable from objection, may in the mind of an Eastern be only the expression of that which is essentially true and justifiable ; and there may be substantial unity without uniformity.

Moreover, there is good reason for us to bear in mind the proverb, that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. An Eastern Churchman has but to take up our Book of Common Prayer, and he will there find that in three important matters, one of them involving fundamental doctrine, the Church of England, though boasting of her reformation and her purity, yet varies from the Church of primitive antiquity. Our reformers retained the *Filioque* in the Creed ; they rejected, I fear deliberately, the scriptural and primitive practice of using chrism in confirmation, confining the outward sign to the laying on of hands ; and they have left us no trace of the Invocation of the Holy Spirit in connection with the consecration of the Bread and Wine, though it is a marked feature in all the earliest Liturgies.

I shall return to the first of these subjects presently, but before doing so I would invite your attention to the "Coptic Church," which by reason of its numbers, undoubtedly presents the leading feature in the Christianity of the land. Its members, moreover, represent the ancient race of the Egyptian people.

This Church is presided over by the Patriarch Cyril, under whom are, in Egypt, two metropolitans and eleven bishops, with a large staff of clergy ; in Abyssinia, one metropolitan and four bishops ; and in Jerusalem, one metropolitan.

I take these statistics, as well as those which I have given about the Orthodox Church, from the report of the representatives of the Association for the Furtherance of Christianity in Egypt ; a society which should command our best sympathy and support. The secretary is the Rev. E. M. Blakiston, 7, Whitehall.

The Coptic creed is, I presume, like that of the Asiatic Monophysites, the Constantinopolitan, or, as we commonly call it, the Nicene Creed ; and their liturgies or anaphoræ, a translation of three of which, by the Rev. J. M. Rodwell, is now before me, are based upon the model of the primitive liturgies ; but the distinguishing feature of this Church is its maintenance of the Monophysite heresy, and consequent rejection of the 4th Œcumenical Council.

In dealing with these people, therefore, it seems to be of the first importance that we should clearly understand in what the Monophysite heresy really consists. The Monophysites, we are told, acknowledge only One Nature in our Lord, and thus it might be thought that they regard Him only as a Man, denying His Divinity. But it is not so. They acknowledge His divinity and His humanity also, in the plainest and most unequivocal terms.

The teaching of Mar Xenajas, one of their greatest doctors, whose other name, Philoxenus, is probably better known in connection with his version of the New Testament, is given by Assemani (Bib. Or. II. 25) to the following effect :—

"The Son, Who is one of the Trinity, united personally to Himself a body endowed with a reasonable soul and mind in the womb of the

Deipara. His body had no existence before this union. In this He was born; in this He was nourished; in this He suffered; in this He died. The Son's divinity suffered not; died not. And all this was done truly and naturally; not in appearance, not fantastically. Further, the word was not converted into flesh, nor mingled therewith, nor confused therewith, nor divided therefrom, and *vice versa*. But the word was united to the humanity, as the reasonable soul is united to the body. And as one human nature is composed from the reasonable soul and body; so from the humanity and divinity of Christ ariseth One Nature, not indeed simple, but compounded, or (for he is said to have adopted St. Cyril's phrase) One Nature enfleshed (*μία φύσις σεσαρκωμένη*.)"

The teaching of Mar Xenajas is expressed in a very ancient Syriac MS (of the Sixth century perhaps) to the same purport, and annexed thereto are some remarkable reasons for rejecting the Council of Chalcedon, among which is the following:—

"No. 8. And again we anathematize and set aside the Council of Chalcedon, because in the one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, it separates the natures, and the properties, and the actions, and the heights, and the humiliations, and the divinities, and the humanities (all these are plurals); and thinks of Him as Two, and *brings in a quaternity*, and worships the simple Son of Man," etc.

A similar dread of worshipping a *Quaternity* in place of the Trinity appears elsewhere in the same treatise, and shows how the language of Chalcedon was misapprehended. [Add. MSS., 14,529, fol. 65, 68, 69. Br. Mus.]

The teaching of Jacobus Baradaëus, from whom the Syrian Jacobites derive their name, was, says Assemani (Bib. Or. II. 25), in accordance with that of Xenajas, and is that of their descendants at the present day.

Thus the Monophysites maintain the union of the divinity and humanity in the person of our Lord as stoutly as any; and they fully accept the four negations of the Council of Chalcedon—*ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιατρέπτως, ἀχωρίστως*:—I find then, for instance, in the Coptic Liturgies of St. Gregory and St. Basil—but whereas the Catholic Church declares these two natures to be "united" (for the Council speaks of *union*, not *conjunction*, and see St. Cyril's third letter to Nestorius, and the anathemas following: Labbe and Cossart III. 949), in the *one Person* of Christ, they maintain *one Nature* in Him; and yet they speak of this nature as *duplex*, and use by way of explanation the simile of wine mingled with water, as opposed to the combination of water and oil.

This appears to be the sum total of their heresy; and since it may perhaps be urged that, if this be so, the difference is one of terms, rather than in the *essence* of the faith, I conceive that there may be a great temptation to condone the Monophysite traditional expression, and even to effect a compromise between them and ourselves, in the hope of gaining their goodwill, and promoting their welfare both as Christians and as Egyptians. Something of this kind was done in India, where Bishop Heber received the Jacobite Metran Athanasius to communion at Bombay, and placed him in his own episcopal chair; and where the special heresy of the Jacobites appears to have been made

of very small account, or rather quite lost sight of, by the Church Missionary Society's missionaries in Travancore.

I am, myself, not unconscious of such a temptation, so great is the interest I feel in these ancient Christian communities, and so great is my love for them. Nevertheless I feel constrained to deprecate most earnestly any condonation of a heresy condemned by the Œcumenical Council of Chalcedon. I do not forget that it was against the vain babbling of Eutyches that the definition of the Council was particularly directed, and the Monophysites expressly reject Eutyches; but their opinion is condemned by that Council in the words, "and feign one (nature) after the union;" and they in turn anathematise the Council. To condone their heresy would therefore be inconsistent with our professed acceptance of the Council; it would be an act of disloyalty to the Church; and it would indefinitely postpone the restoration of intercommunion with the Eastern Church, whose claim to Catholicity is indisputable, and whose members are numbered by millions.

I lay the more stress upon this, because unity is one of the first duties and chief necessities of Christendom; and to break unity by obstinate resistance to the ruling of a General Council, is on this ground a crime that may not be excused; it is of the very essence of *heresy*—a *choosing* of one's own judgment in preference to the teaching of the Catholic Church.

It is difficult to know how to deal with cases such as these; but I am strongly impressed with the conviction that sympathy with minds perplexed, a recognition of their difficulties, and of their desire to get at the truth (which must be allowed to those who differ from us, unless there be the clearest proof to the contrary), and entreaty to submit private judgment to the decision of the Church in Council, will do more than argument. One should remember, too, the inadequacy of words to deal with transcendent mystery. No language can ever represent the fulness of fact; no word painting can present the picture before the eye in all its details; it serves but to create or aid imagination. In the striking words of Professor Westcott, "The Bible itself teaches us, by its antithetical utterances, that no single expression of the truth is co-extensive with the truth itself." "Life proves beyond question," he adds, "that words gather wealth in the course of ages; and it is not too much to say that no formula which expresses clearly the thought of one generation can convey the same meaning to the generation which follows." [Preface to "Rev. of the Father." 1884].

What, then, can be done? Are there no active steps to be taken by us as Churchmen in our dealings with the Christians of the East? Yes, indeed there are; and they will demand all the energy, care, and prudence which it may be given us to bestow upon them.

1. In the first place, I think we should endeavour to assist the Copts and other Christians in Egypt, by promoting their temporal security, so that none shall be molested or oppressed on account of his religion. This is a matter of political detail; but it may be in our power to urge it upon those who hold the reins.

2. Then there is the question of education; and here we may surely render assistance of a very practical kind.

Miss Whately has been working patiently in this direction for the last 23 years, and her schools at Cairo now receive nearly 700 pupils, of

whom about half the boys and two-thirds of the girls are Moslems, the rest mostly Copts. "Controversial teaching," she writes, "is not permitted in my schools; but there is no keeping back the knowledge of salvation through the One Mediator between God and man, and the Scripture is freely taught to all." Here, then, is a very important centre of educational work, which has already been supplemented by the establishment of a Medical Mission, and of a higher school by Miss E. J. Whately.

But it is not the education of children alone that is wanted. The Coptic clergy are taken, it seems, from among those who are pursuing their ordinary work as laymen, and have had no special training for the ministry. Would it not be possible, then, to promote the education of the clergy, both before and after ordination? I would do this, without attempting any controversial interference with their religious tenets, by promoting the study of Church history; and, above all, of the holy Scriptures in the Hebrew and the Greek, the former of which, at least, from its affinity with Arabic, would, I apprehend, be acquired with little difficulty.

At present, with the exception of Miss Whately's schools and mission, but little has been done by us. A mission has, however, been recently established at Cairo by the Church Missionary Society, and there is, I am told, the sum of £200 at the disposal of the Standing Committee of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in case of a mission being opened of which that committee should approve.

3. An appeal has been made to us for help in another direction, and that is against the seduction of the American Presbyterian missionaries, who have already persuaded many families of the Copts to join them. Now we need not doubt that these missionaries lay stress upon salvation through Christ, and upon the importance of faith, and piety, and moral virtue, as far more essential than mere ritual observances; but they cannot lay more stress on these points than a Churchman will do, if he be a true man. The Presbyterian and other Protestant sects, having rejected episcopacy, have lost, I fear, the power to celebrate a valid communion, and so far from promoting the restoration of their adherents to Catholic unity, they do but lead them away from primitive order, with consequences that are incalculable. The Coptic priests have asked for tracts in support of Episcopacy against Presbyterianism; so that here we have an opportunity of addressing the people with the good will of their own clergy. This is a great opportunity, and I trust it will be wisely and faithfully used.

These, then, are some of the steps which occur to me as called for on our part by our very position in the country. But there is far more to be urged than this. I think I see before us an opportunity, magnificent beyond what could have been conceived possible only a few years ago, in the position into which we have drifted under the disposal—can we doubt it?—of an all-controlling Providence. May we not, ought we not, to make an effort, through our relations with the Orthodox Church in Egypt, to restore union (and by union I mean not only reciprocal good feeling, shown in complimentary letters and hospitality, but actual recognition and intercommunion) between the holy Eastern Church and ourselves?

But with any such object before us we must go with the Holy Scriptures and the Primitive Creed of Christendom in our hands. I have spoken of our retention of the interpolated *Filioque* in the Creed. That it is an interpolation there can be no doubt; that indeed has never been seriously disputed. I can myself point to the particular shelf and volume in which a MS. copy of the Creed is contained, written nearly 1000 years before Luther was born, and it has not the *Filioque*. We find traces of the doctrine long before the time of King Reccared; but when, and where, and by whom the *Filioque* was *first introduced into the Creed* is uncertain. It gradually found its way into the west, and being eventually adopted by the Church of Rome, was afterwards strenuously insisted upon by her. In this matter Rome changed her own policy, for Pope Leo III. had repudiated the addition, and she changed it apparently with the object of obtaining the recognition of her supremacy even over an Œcumenical Council. From Rome then we have inherited the *Filioque*, and at the Reformation the clause was probably overlooked, not being one of the points in controversy at the time, and so it remains in our Prayer Book to this day.

When we reflect that it is into the exact language of the great Creed of Christendom that this clause is introduced, and that the predicate it contains is concerning the essence of one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, it becomes impossible to contend that it is of little importance. The nature of the Godhead is a subject we are bound to treat with the most reverent awe, and can be known only by what God reveals concerning Himself. The council of Ephesus forbade any addition to the Nicene Creed (Ac. 6). The council of Chalcedon, after reciting the Creed as it then stood, *i.e.*, without the *Filioque* (and this long after the doctrine of the double procession had appeared both in east and west) declared that "it teaches perfection, ἐκδιδάσκει τὸ τέλειον,* concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," and denounced anathema or deposition against any who should presume to propose, compile, hold, or teach another faith. And the Eastern Church has maintained a constant protest against the addition.

When all this is considered, it will be seen to be a very serious thing still to retain the clause. I do not presume to say that it predicates what is untrue; but it is really no part of the Creed: it cannot, I submit, be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture—for it is not to the Mission of the Holy Ghost by the Son, but to His eternal Procession that the clause refers: its retention brings us under the anathemas of Ephesus and Chalcedon, and renders intercommunion with the great Church of the East impossible.

And why should we desire to retain the clause? Is it because we have inherited it from Rome? or got it, perhaps, from some error of a copyist, or from a small Spanish Council? or is it simply because we have had it now for so many hundred years that it is too much to expect that we should give it up?

It would not, indeed, be without a wrench that we should remove an expression which we and our fathers have been wont to use, in simple obedience (as we thought) to the Church's teaching, and in

* The Greek expression, it will be seen, is, if possible, stronger than the *perfectionem docet* of the Latin.

all the awe and earnestness of Christian confession ; but with such an example of sincerity on the part of the great and powerful Church of England, we should be in a position from which we might consistently urge the adoption of such reforms in our sister Church of the East as careful examination might show to be desirable.

I venture to advocate the unconditional removal of this clause from the Creed. And I do so in connection with our present subject, because I believe that any steps that may be taken in this direction would be of immediate and material assistance to us in whatever efforts we make in behalf of the Orthodox and Coptic Christians of Egypt.

A movement of so momentous a character should not be hurried, and the machinery of our constitution renders undue haste impossible ; but if it were carried out, I see no limit to the results we might hope for from its accomplishment. For the *Filioque* is, I suppose, the most serious bar to our recognition by the Eastern Church ; and if this recognition were mutually attained, there are not wanting directions in which action might at once be taken for reciprocal comfort and edification, and for the extension of Christ's kingdom through the world.

The moral weight of such a union would be inestimable. Our own network of apostolic succession—for it is a network rather than a chain—would be placed beyond the Romanist's cavil, by the co-operation of Eastern bishops in our consecrations ; the infusion of Western energy would, under the divine blessing, be sensibly felt for good in the Churches of the East ; and the assembling of a great Council of all Orthodox Christendom, in which the four quarters of the world should be represented, might become no idle day-dream. The late Archbishop of Canterbury did a great thing in convening the Pan-Anglican Synods ; what if it should be reserved for his grace, our present Primate, to do a yet greater thing by bringing about a council which might not unreasonably claim to be Œcumenical ? Rome would certainly stand aloof ; but Rome, insisting on the *Filioque* in the teeth of Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, and on the reception of claims and dogmas unknown to primitive antiquity, would not be in a position (notwithstanding her imposing numbers) to offer any valid objection on the score of not being represented. Such a council would have for one of its objects the reconciliation of the Nestorians of Asia, and the Monophysites of Asia and Africa, on such terms as, being consistent with the Catholic Faith, as might least wound their *amour propre*, and least interfere with the temporal interests and ecclesiastical position of their patriarchs, bishops, clergy, and people.

One's mind is crowded with thoughts and hopes of what might be possible if such a dream were realised ; but I must not now indulge in the discussion of them, and I have only to thank you for the patience with which you have so kindly heard me. I am deeply sensible of the grave responsibility I incur by venturing to bring forward thus publicly the proposal I have made. It is, however, no novelty, no revolutionary measure, that I am advocating, but only a return to the creed of the Œcumenical Councils of the Church. And the question *must* be faced, if we are to have any dealings with the Christian population of Egypt that shall be at once sound, cordial, and lasting in their character.